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BOB CHANCELLOR/NAIROBI

UNCTAD FOUR: ANOTHER STEP ON THE ROAD

ANNCR: THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT HAS ENDED A MONTH-LONG MEETING IN NAIROBI, KENYA. VOA CORRESPONDENT BOB CHANCELLOR COVERED THE CONFERENCE AND NOW HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS.

VOICE: ON THE SURFACE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE ENOUGH PROGRESS AT UNCTAD-FOUR TO JUSTIFY THE TIME AND ENERGY IT TOOK TO CONDUCT THE MONTH-LONG MEETING. IDEAS AND PROPOSALS FOR CLOSING THE GAP SEEMED TO BECOME DILUTED BY THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION, OF GIVE-AND-TAKE, AND OF PLAYING WITH SEMANTIC NUANCES TO THE POINT THAT THEY BECOME MEANINGLESS.

BUT IF UNCTAD-FOUR IS VIEWED AS ONE-STAGE IN THE CONTINUUM OF EFFORTS OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY TO CREATE A NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER, THEN THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THIS CONFERENCE TAKE ON NEW SIGNIFICANCE. INDEED, REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH INDUSTRIAL AND DEVELOPING STATES SAID THE NAIROBI UNCTAD MEETING WILL BE REMEMBERED PARTICULARLY FOR ITS ACTIONS IN THE FIELD OF COMMODITIES WHICH PROVIDE SO MUCH OF THE INCOME FROM THE DEVELOPING NATIONS. IT IS INTERESTING THAT BOTH SIDES IN THE CONFERENCE CAN VIEW WITH SATISFACTION, A RESOLUTION ON COMMODITIES THAT FALLS FAR SHORT OF THE STATED DESIRES OF EITHER SIDE.

THE RESOLUTION RECOGNIZES THE NEED TO CONDUCT INTERNATIONAL TRADE ON A BASIS OF MUTUAL ADVANTAGE AND EQUITABLE BENEFITS. AND IT ADOPTS WHAT IS CALLED AN INTEGRATED PROGRAM FOR COMMODITIES TO CONSIDER PRICING MECHANISMS FOR EIGHTEEN PRODUCTS, RANGING FROM BANANAS TO OLIVE OIL, AND INCLUDING KEY PRODUCTS SUCH AS IRON ORE, COPPER AND COFFEE. TO THIS END, THE UNCTAD MEMBERS AGREED TO HOLD PREPARATORY MEETINGS BEFORE NEXT MARCH TO DISCUSS THE

OBJECTIVES AND MODALITIES OF A COMMON FUND. THE FUND WOULD BE USED TO FINANCE THE PURCHASE OF BUFFER STOCKS WHICH WOULD BE USED TO STABALIZE PRICES OF COMMODITIES. LATER, A NEGOTIATING CONFERENCE ON A COMMON FUND WILL BE HELD, OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS, BUT N O T OBLIGATORY FOR THOSE INDUSTRIAL STATES THAT HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE VALUE AND OPERATION OF A COMMON FUND.

THIS WAS THE COMPROMISE WORKED OUT IN HOURS AND HOURS OF HARD BARGAINING. THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES HAD COME TO NAIROBI SEEKING SEEKING IMMEDIATE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMON FUND. THE INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES CAME TO SEEK COMMODITY BY COMMODITY PRICE NEGOTIATION IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENT FREE MARKET SYSTEM. THE TWO SIDES IN THE DISPUTE HAVE RESERVED THEIR RIGHT TO INTERPRET THE MEANING OF THE COMPROMISE RESOLUTION IN THEIR OWN WAY. BUT THE UNCTAD SECRETARY GENERAL, GAMANI COREA, THE DESIGNER OF THE INTEGRATED PROGRAM FOR COMMODITIES, SAID HE BELIEVES HIS ORGANIZATION NOW HAS A MANDATE TO ACT ON THE COMMODITIES PROBLEM. THE CONTROVERSIAL COMMON FUND WILL AT LEAST BE STUDIED AND DISCUSSED.

A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW OF UNCTAD IS PROVIDED BY AMERICAN DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE CHARLES ROBINSON, WHO DESCRIBED UNCTAD AS A PLACE FOR TAKING THE WORLD'S TEMPERATURE, AS A FORUM FOR IDEAS. HE SAID HE BELIEVES THAT TECHNICAL NEGOTIATIONS ON SPECIFIC ECONOMIC MATTERS CAN BE DONE BETTER IN OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORUMS, SUCH AS THE NORTH-SOUTH CONFERENCE IN PARIS. UNCTAD, HE BELIEVES, IS TOO POLITICIZED AND TWO UNWIELDY WITH ITS HUGE DELEGATIONS FROM ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY-FOUR COUNTRIES. BUT SECRETARY ROBINSON SAID HE THOUGHT UNCTAD HAD MADE GREAT PROGRESS TOWARD BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE OF THE PROCESS OF DIALOGUE, AND THAT IT WILL LEAD TO NEW RELATIONSHIPS AND NEW ARRANGEMENTS THAT WILL

SERVE BOTH THE DEVELOPED AND THE DEVELOPING WORLDS. THE AMERICAN OFFICIAL'S ONE REGRET WAS THAT THE CONFERENCE REJECTED, ON A ROLL CALL VOTE, SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER'S PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES BANK. THE BANK WOULD PROVIDE FINANCING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. SECRETARY ROBINSON WAS SURPRISED AND SOMEWHAT PUZZLED BY THE REJECTION OF A PROGRAM OF WHICH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WOULD HAVE BEEN THE PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES. HE SAID, "WE WANTED A SOUND AND COMPREHENSIVE COMMODITIES PROGRAM; WE GOT HALF OF IT." BUT IN OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORUMS THE UNITED STATES WILL TRY AGAIN TO ACHIEVE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES BANK. (OPT) THE COMMODITIES PROGRAM OVERSHADOWED THE DOZENS OF OTHER RESOLUTIONS NEGOTIATED AND APPROVED BY UNCTAD, FAR TOO MANY MAJOR STEPS WERE TAKEN TO BE LISTED, BUT SOME STAND OUT. THE INDUSTRIAL NATIONS PLEDGED TO LOOK TOWARD RELIEF OF THE DEBT BURDEN OF SERIOUSLY AFFECTED NATIONS, AND TO TRY TO DEVELOP A FRAMWORK FOR FUTURE DEBT RELIEF. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE WERE PROMISES BY SEVERAL NATIONS THAT FUTURE AID TO THE POOREST NATIONS WOULD BE ON A GRANT RATHER THAN LOAN BASIS. A RESOLUTION ASKED THE SOCIALIST BLOC FOR GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN ITS TERMS OF TRADE WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND FOR CONVERTIBILITY OF RUBLES EARNED IN SUCH TRADE. SEVERAL ITEMS DEALT WITH THE TRANSFER OF WESTERN TECHNOLOGY, AND WITH TRAINING PEOPLE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD TO FUNCTION WITHIN A NEW WORLD ORDER. AND THERE WERE DISCUSSIONS OF TRADE AND COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHICH WERE RECOGNIZED AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT. (END OPT)

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